1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

custom. In the Amwi doloiship a widow who consents to pay the costs of her husband's funeral, provided she agrees not to re-marry, inherits half of her husband's acquired property.

In the Wár country the children inherit both ancestral and acquired property in equal shares, both males and females, with the exception that the youngest daughter is given something in addition to her share, although not such a large share of the property as amongst the Khasis. Amongst the Mikir-Bhois, i.e. the Mikirs who inhabit the Bhoi doloiship of the Jaintia Hills, the law of inheritance is totally different from that of the Khasis, for males succeed to all property, whether ancestral or acquired. Thus, if a man dies, leaving son, mother, wife, and daughters, the son takes all. If there are several sons, they divide. If there are no sons, the property goes to the nearest male heir. If a woman dies, leaving husband and children, the husband takes all. If the husband is dead, and there are sons and daughters, the former inherit. The great difference in the custom of inheritance between Khasis and Bhois is, as I have already pointed out, part of the evidence that these people are of different origin.

The Lyngam law of inheritance is the same as that of the Khasis. The youngest daughter obtains the largest share of the ancestral property, the remainder being divided between the remaining daughters. The sons do not get any share. The rule is also said to apply with regard to acquired property.

ADOPTION.

Both Khasis and Syntengs observe a custom known as *'rap iing* (an abbreviation for *ia rap iing*, literally, to help the house). This is practically adoption. If in a family the female members have died out, the male members of the family are allowed by custom to call (*khot*) a girl from some other family, to act as *ka'rap iing*, and to perform the family religious ceremonies, and therefore to inherit the family ancestral property. The female so introduced into the family then takes her place as *ka khun khadduh*, or youngest daughter, and becomes the head of the house (*ka trai iing*). The

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

The adoption of a female obviates the family dying out (*iap duh*), which to the Khasi is a very serious matter, inasmuch as there will then be no one qualified to place the bones of its members within the family tomb (*ka ba thep shieng mawbah*), and to perform the requisite funeral ceremonies. Amongst the Khasis no particular ceremonies are performed at the time of adoption; but some of the Syntengs observe a religious ceremony which consists largely of a feast to the clans-folk, at which liquor, rice, dried fish, and ginger are partaken of. Before the feast commences, each clansman is provided with a small gourd (*u klong*) filled with liquor, a little of the latter is then thrown on the ground from the gourd, and the following words are uttered:—

"Oh, God! oh, Lord! oh, ruling king Biskurom, now the *pynrap iing* ceremony is about to be performed, let the ceremony be propitious, and let males and females (of the clan) increase in numbers, so that the clan may become great, and respected, and that intelligent male members may spring up." No such ceremony is, however, observed, it is understood, in the Nartiang and Raliang doloiships.

In the case of a family being *iap duh* (extinct), the family property, according to Khasi custom, passes to the Siem. Therefore it is to the interest of the members of families to adopt a female, when such necessity arises. As there is no religious ceremony which is compulsory to the Khasis on the occasion of an adoption, perhaps we are almost justified in concluding that in former times the adoption custom did not exist, more especially as the Khasis possess a special word, *iap duh*, for describing a family the females of which have all died out; and it is admittedly the custom for the Siem to succeed to the property of such a family. The Synteng custom of *'rap iing* may have been borrowed from the Hindus, when the Rajas of Jaintia became converts to that religion.

TENURE OF LAND AND LAWS REGARDING LAND.

Land in the Khasi Hills proper, i.e. land in the high plateau, is held somewhat differently from land in the Jaintia Hills and

Il: Chattopadhyay E-4, 5 (no date) 1941 AR7 Khasi AR7

While the traditions regarding the origin of Khar Dumpep and Khar Sohnoh collected by me do not support the view that the ancestress came necessarily from the plains, it is clear that they support Gurdon's hypothesis that those clans are derived from ancestresses who came from or settled in certain villages. It is evident that Gurdon's hypothesis implies that the husbands of these women, who brought them home from elsewhere, could clear land and transmit such property to their daughters, although the mother of the daughters did not own any land locally. This right to clear the Ri Raid is therefore not a recent innovation.

I have noted these details here as this aspect of inheritance from males has not been clarified elsewhere. It is not meant of course that this right to clear land extended to the special clan lands or family property matrilenial of the man. As noted before the Kni manages such land and makes over the income or produce to the women who are the owners. Even in such land, however, a man has some rights. Both Gurdon and Cantlie state that a male can adopt a blood relative of the same Kur if all the female members of the particular stock are dead. He himself holds the property for life only, when the women of the line are dead. On adopting a girl of the Kur, she becomes the keeper of the property and also his successor. But "the profits of his labours in the landed property can be used for his wife and children." The inherent right of the male is brought out to a certain extent in this rule also. Such private lands are known as Ri Kynti. It may be of the family or the clan. As an example of family land may be noted the case of the forest of U Nong Sohra, the husband of Ka Jem [Genealogy I(*a*)]. He cleared some Ri Raid land and planted pine trees there. Only the descendants of Ka Jem can cut trees in this forest which is now practically private property of this group. But the land is essentially Ri Raid in this sense that it cannot be alienated and when all trees have been cut away, any villager will be entitled to occupy it. The Khar Shiing Kur as a whole has true private lands near the village. If people of other clans want to cultivate

clothing, operate the large Khasi business establishments in Shillong, and provide all civic and religious leadership. Women care for children and for the home, do the marketing, and sell dried fish, betel nut, lime, fruits, and rice breads at markets. Other tasks can be performed by either sex. **Land tenure.** Land was formerly divided into sib land and public domain. Sib land was corporately held in perpetuity, and was inalienable except by the unanimous consent of all members of the sib. The public domain was subject to usufructuary right by anyone who kept the land regularly under habitation or cultivation, with a lapse of no more than three years. Most villages grew up on public domain, and then reckoned all land inhabited or under cultivation by a village member as village land. Forests were public, except for sacred groves possessed by villages or lineage groups, and everyone was free to gather branches for fuel. Wastelands and streams were also public. By now, most public domain and village land, together with its forest cover, has been pre-empted as private property and is being rented and sold as such. Sib lands *remain intact, unless* the sibs agree to rent, lease, or sell. [Cf. Cantlie 1934.]

KIN GROUPS. **Descent.** Descent is matrilineal, and the Khasi is a member exclusively of his own matrilineage from birth to death. Adoption, which is very rare, is only within the matrilineage. **Kin groups.** The maximal matrilineage is the sib; this is a named, widely dispersed, strictly exogamous, lineage group, which claims but cannot trace its origin from a single ancestress. Sibs used to meet as corporate groups from time to time. Some sibs are linked with others in large amorphous groups that are unnamed and are defined solely by exogamy. Such a group is composed of two or more sibs, the ancestresses of which are claimed to have been either real sisters or dear friends who out of affection declared that thenceforth their descendants would be as consanguineals. The origin and function of sib-linkage is now unknown, and today the members of a sib will often disagree on whether or not their sib is linked with another. • The minimal matrilineage is the local descent group, or *iing*. This is the largest kin group that normally rallies at life crises. It is said that the *iing* formerly spanned six generations; today, it encompasses only four. If an *iing* grows to more than four generations in a single village, it segments. New houses are located at some distance from the old and the *iing* soon forgets exactly how to trace genealogical connection, except for which segment descended from a youngest sister. The term *iing* may also be applied to an extended family, an elementary family, and a house. The elementary family is the basic domestic unit in Khasi society. In any village there are likely to be one or two households which stand as sole local representatives of the lineage of the female household head. Such a household is known as an